

UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

Land of Opportunity: Anti-Black and Settler Logics in the Gentrification of Detroit

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/98q2w0hq>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 43(2)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Quizar, Jessi

Publication Date

2019-03-01

DOI

10.17953/aicrj.43.2.quizar

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

Peer reviewed

Land of Opportunity: Anti-Black and Settler Logics in the Gentrification of Detroit

Jessi Quizar

“Walking on Indigenous land we call the ghetto.”

—Soufy, “Soul Alive”

The idea that “gentrification is the new colonialism” has become increasingly ubiquitous in anti-gentrification movements in the United States. In the spring of 2016, for example, the phrase was stenciled onto the sidewalk in front of the Jefferson Street subway station in the Bushwick neighborhood of Brooklyn. This same slogan has appeared on T-shirts and protest signs and has been incorporated into activism against gentrification in US urban centers from Brooklyn to Seattle.

This comparison between gentrification and colonialism has been challenged by numerous Indigenous critics. In an online essay post reacting to such claims in the Northwest, Lakota writer Wakíŋyaŋ Waánataŋ (also known as Matt Remle) writes that gentrification “is absolutely horrible and is driven by classism and capitalism, and in many cases racism as well, and certainly needs to be addressed and fought against, but it is not colonialism.” He adds, “no matter how expensive rents increased in their neighborhoods and no matter where in Seattle they may end up moving to, it was all Duwamish land.”¹

Few conversations about gentrification in the United States wrestle seriously with either the land theft or genocide that undergirds the space of all US cities. Indeed, more often than not, the idea of colonization is evoked as a metaphor rather than a

JESSI QUIZAR (Ch’orti’ Maya) is an assistant professor in Ethnic Studies at Northern Arizona University and a parent of four. She researches racial struggles over urban space and grassroots communities’ engagement with freedom dreams that envision futures that are decolonized, anti-racist, and other than capitalist.

concrete and ongoing structure. For instance, Black film director Spike Lee, in a widely cited 2014 speech at Pratt Institute, described gentrification in his father's Brooklyn neighborhood:

Then comes the motherfuckin' Christopher Columbus Syndrome. You can't discover this! We been here. You just can't come and bogart. There were brothers playing motherfuckin' African drums in Mount Morris Park for forty years and now they can't do it anymore because the new inhabitants said the drums are loud. My father's a great jazz musician. He bought a house in nineteen-motherfuckin'-sixty-eight, and the motherfuckin' people moved in last year and called the cops on my father . . . We bought the motherfuckin' house in nineteen-sixty-motherfuckin'-eight and now you call the cops? In 2013? Get the fuck outta here!

Nah. You can't do that. You can't just come in the neighborhood and start bogarting and say, like you're motherfuckin' Columbus and kill off the Native Americans.²

Colonization, as Lee deploys the idea, is a metaphor for Black oppression, one that not only objectifies Native people as one-dimensional caricatures, but, most importantly, imagines them as over. Past tense. Native people have been, in Lee's words, "killed off." American genocide, in his presentation, becomes an historical object lesson. This opens the door to the idea reflected in the graffiti piece in Bushwick—that "gentrification is the new colonialism"—which requires that the "old" colonialism be considered over and done.

The metaphorical indigenization of Black people, while taking place through a rhetoric of anti-colonialism, actually echoes colonizing strategies. Early American colonies asserted their separation from European origins by "indigenizing" themselves as a central strategy of settler state building. The Boston Tea Party was carried out in "Indian" regalia with white protestors "war-whooping" to symbolize an American resistance to colonial oppression.³ The comparison of Black oppression with Indigenous oppression is not new either. As with Lee's argument against gentrification, it has frequently taken the form of alarm that Black people will be subject to the same genocide and displacement that Indigenous people have experienced. In their pivotal 1966 essay "The City is the Black Man's Land," legendary Detroit organizers and philosophers James and Grace Lee Boggs argued that if Black people fail to rise up to take political control of American cities, that they would face "wholesale extermination of the Black population through mass massacres or forced mass migrations onto reservations as with the Indians."⁴

While Black appropriation of indigeneity certainly has much less widespread or detrimental impact than that of white settlers, it maintains some worrisome aspects. In particular, this metaphorical indigenization of Black non-Natives operates through a rhetoric of anti-colonialism while failing to treat seriously ongoing Native claims to land and space and struggles against colonialism. By deploying this metaphor, both Lee and the Boggses erase Indigenous claims to the space of the city, and, indeed, invoke indigeneity to argue that the space should be claimed by non-Native Black people. Similar rhetoric also erases Indigenous presence in other cities such as Detroit.

In short, it would seem obvious that asserting gentrification to be a form of settler colonialism, even as a metaphor, is a lousy starting place from which to develop Black–Native solidarity.

And yet . . . I lived in Detroit from 2011 to 2016, a period in which the city began experiencing what was described by such publications as *The Guardian* and *The New York Times* as a “comeback.”⁵ As I have argued elsewhere, much of the subtext in these narratives of “comeback” implies that Detroit—the Blackest large city in the United States—was coming back because white people were returning.⁶ White people’s presence implies legitimacy. Detroit is discursively disappeared when white people leave and comes back when they return. In media stories featuring the process of Detroit’s “comeback,” it is striking how frequently the language of westward expansion and settlement is deployed to reframe Black urban space. For example, new, usually white residents are “urban pioneers”⁷ who settle into “urban homesteads.”⁸ Portrayals of the city as completely evacuated of people have been even more ubiquitous, despite a continued population larger than that of Atlanta or Portland. In addition, they frequently promote a narrative of white people who are “saving” the city—presumably from Black underdevelopment, mismanagement, and underproductivity.⁹

So, although I am disturbed by an uncritical metaphor such as Lee’s that equates gentrification with settler colonialism, I am increasingly convinced that we must take the relationship between them seriously. I came to this belief during the five years I lived and studied in Detroit. I am a Chort’i’ Maya person with my primary scholarly home in Black studies who holds primary communities in both Black and Indigenous spaces. As I witnessed the gentrification and displacement of Black communities in Detroit, it was not difficult to see connections to aspects of settler colonialism. This essay is being offered as a route into a conversation that takes seriously both settler colonialism and anti-Black racism and the ongoing threats to the well-being of both Black and Indigenous people in the United States. This article traces shifting racializations of Black Detroiters and demonstrates that they are increasingly subject to many of the same US tropes and racial logics that historically had more frequently been applied to Indigenous people.

After explaining what I mean by “racialization,” I outline the ways in which Black and Indigenous people in the United States have been racialized differently as the result of the differing aims of white settler capital. I view the shifting place of Black labor as a crux of shifting Black racialization; thus, my discussion turns to the shifts in Detroit’s economy since the mid-twentieth century, particularly the dramatic rise in unemployment, and more recently, the foreclosures, evictions, and water shutoffs which dramatically displaced and impacted both Black and Indigenous people. From there I move into a discussion of the gentrification that has accompanied the recent waves of displacement of Black and Indigenous people from the city, analyzing the ways that gentrification narratives reiterate settler logics of disappearance, salvation, and a moral imperative to settle and make land “productive.” These narratives reiterate settler logics on Indigenous communities, as well as marks a shift in racialization of Black Detroiters through a settler logic as well. I end by discussing efforts at Black and

Indigenous solidarity in the city, including the hip-hop collective Raiz Up's counternarrative showing Detroit as a space of both Black and Indigenous struggle.

BLACK AND NATIVE RACIALIZATION

This article asks why so much of the language of settler colonialism, and its attendant logics, are increasingly being applied to the most predominantly Black large city in the United States. In order to explore this question, I rely heavily on critical race theory, which has shown us the ways in which race is a social construction; that is, categories of race, racial logics, stereotypes, and other stratifications are developed socially, shifting according to time and place.¹⁰ Both intellectually and politically, it is important to approach race and racialization of Native Americans while considering what can and cannot be gained by such discussions. There is, for example, a long-standing critique within Native American and Indigenous studies of the ways in which ethnic studies and other broad discourses of race in the United States have tended to fold Native Americans into a general multicultural racial schema. That is, rather than nations in a specific colonial relationship with a settler state, Native people have frequently been framed simply as one of many racial groups that face racial discrimination within the United States, ignoring the unique political and legal position of Native people in the American settler state.¹¹ This critique establishes that Indigenous peoples in the United States have an abiding interest in not being folded into generalized language and struggles around race. And yet, attention to race does not necessarily imply ignorance of sovereignty. As Andrea Smith has argued, this “intellectual and political divide” results in “insufficient dialogue between [ethnic studies and Native American studies] that would help us understand how white supremacy and settler colonialism intersect.”¹²

While it is clear that there are many important reasons to frame Indigenous movements, demands, or senses of self in self-defined ways and outside of racial schemas, it also seems clear that Indigenous people have not avoided being racialized in a United States culture where the economy and social life is widely organized through race. Legal scholar Addie Rolnick has argued that it can be legally and practically useful to integrate into a larger conception of Indigenous political struggles the ways in which Indigenous people have been racialized and subjected to racism. To do so does not deny Native sovereignty, she contends, but rather that “Indian political rights are a racial remedy”—that is, understanding and fighting against anti-Indigenous racism necessitates Indigenous sovereignty and political rights.¹³

The remaining portion of this article examines this racial logic imposed by an overarching structure of white supremacy. I am particularly interested in the ways in which the interests of white settler capital in the United States have structured racial categories, racial stereotypes, racial logics and stratifications for both Black and Indigenous people. Particular groups of people are racialized largely by structures designed to facilitate white settler goals of spatial and capitalist expansion. Because white settler capital has wanted to exploit Black bodies, the racial “common sense” that developed about blackness has been generally in the interest of maintaining

and justifying that exploitation. Similarly, because white settler capital has wanted to appropriate Indigenous land, the racial logic that evolved about “Indianness” was similarly well-suited to the task of maintaining and justifying that theft.

Patrick Wolfe argues that Native racialization has largely been structured through a logic of elimination which serves to eradicate Native claims to land—by means of cultural genocide, discursive erasures, and outright organized and institutionalized mass murder. In contrast, Black people in the United States have been largely racialized through what Saidiya Hartman calls Black “fungibility,” a word that denotes exchangeability. Under slavery, the fungibility of commodified Black bodies led to a racial system based on “exploiting the vulnerability of the captive body as a vessel for the uses, thoughts, and feelings of others”¹⁴ that was marked by quotidian violence. Black fungibility is the abstraction of Black bodies in the service of white desires and profit and the pervasive everyday violence that accompanies a prevalent sense that Black life is cheap and replaceable—in fact, that individual Black lives do not matter. The logic of Black fungibility developed as a central support for and result of the American system of chattel slavery. In other words, although both Black and Native people have been racialized in the context of white settler colonialism, crucially, it has been through interrelated, but different, logics that meet different white settler desires. A white settler nation relied on both of these logics in constructing a modern racial settler state and racial capitalism. As Wolfe notes, “Once evacuated, the Red man’s land would be mixed with Black labour” to ultimately produce the white settler state.¹⁵

Racial heritability is commonly cited as an example of the ways in which different positioning of Black and Native people in white settler regimes has resulted in differing racial logics.¹⁶ Black heritability in the United States has generally operated according to the “one drop rule”—that is, theoretically, if you have one “drop” of Black ancestry, or any characteristics that could indicate any Black ancestry, you are likely to be categorized as Black. This supports a system of Black “slavability” because white settler capital has generally valued Black bodies for the labor and pleasure that may be extracted from them.¹⁷ Having more people “count” as Black creates a greater pool of fungible Black bodies from which whites may benefit, economically and otherwise. By contrast, blood quantum, which has been used to determine who is Native in the United States, is consistent with a logic of elimination, because over time it progressively reduces the number of people who are Native enough to “count.” Fewer people who “count” as Native means fewer and weaker competing territorial claims. Notably, these differing racializations positioned Black people as essentially unassimilable into whiteness;¹⁸ on the other hand, Indigenous people have been framed as assimilable,¹⁹ as observed in policies and programs intended to “kill the Indian in him to save the man.”²⁰

It is important to recognize that both slavery and colonization undergird contemporary racial logics despite framing that distances them as historical moments. Wolfe famously said of settler colonialism, “invasion is a structure, not an event”;²¹ the United States relies on the continued salience of settler logic in order to justify and maintain its existence. As an example, Mark Rifkin has pointed out that in order for the settler state to assert its own legitimacy, non-Natives must not feel an active sense of struggle over the houses they legally own.²² Similarly, enslavement has deep repercussions

in the everyday realities of the experience of blackness in the United States—that Black people live daily, as Christina Sharpe puts it, in the wake of enslavement.²³ For instance, after emancipation, Black people continued to be largely locked into job markets that viewed them as hyperexploitable workers, which Andrea Smith points out is related to a much broader racialization: “slavable.”²⁴

Because these racial logics play out in different ways in different moments and places, the outline of racial grammars in this article is presented with the caution that they are flexible and incomplete. Tiffany Lethobo King has pointed out, to create a rigid binary between oppressions—Black oppression being of the body and Native oppression being about land is not useful.²⁵ Native people have certainly experienced forms of fungibility and extreme violence on the body. And American chattel slavery was made possible by tearing Black people from their homelands—and thus, has also always been about displacement and a severing of land and place relationships. These complications call on us to think of racialization of Native and Black people as intertwined, co-determinative, and ever adaptable. Specifically, these racial logics have changed and continue to change, according to shifting conditions in the interests of white settler capital.

INDIGENOUS DETROIT

Certainly, a settler racialization of Indigenous elimination has characterized narratives and the experience of indigeneity in Detroit. The city was established in large part to profit from relationships with Anishinaabe and other tribes, who trapped the furs that were foundational to the North American colonial economy. Both Indigenous and Black people were enslaved in the city, and their labor in many ways formed the foundation for its early life.²⁶ Black and Saginaw Anishinaabe historian Kyle Mays notes that these settler narratives used stories of the “disappearance” of Native people as a way to contrast a pre-modern (Indigenous) past with a description of Detroit as a (white) modern place. He also notes that in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Indigenous Detroiters struggled to become visible in a city whose history and identity tend to be constructed along a Black-white binary.²⁷ Nevertheless, Indigenous presence has been continuous throughout Detroit’s history and present. In the twentieth century Indigenous people came to the city for many of the same reasons that attracted other migrants: jobs in the massive auto and manufacturing industries. Beginning in 1954, Natives also came to Detroit through the federal Urban Relocation program that attempted to foster assimilation by encouraging Indigenous people to move from reservations to cities.

Indigenous Detroiters from various tribal affiliations formed educational, cultural, and political organizations, largely based in southwest Detroit. These included the 1994 founding of a Detroit Public School focused on Native-centric education, Medicine Bear American Indian Academy, an effort that was widely supported by many of the same Black leaders that advocated for the availability of African-centric education in the now-majority Black city.²⁸ While Medicine Bear is now closed, other institutions remain, including the North American Indian Association of Detroit,

which sponsors cultural, artistic and political activities, and American Indian Health and Family Services, a clinic and social services organization. Additionally, Indigenous visibility in the city may perhaps be increasing with the city council's 2018 decision to replace Columbus Day with Indigenous People's Day, largely as the result of political organizing by Detroit's Native community.

However, despite continued presence, activism, and community involvement, contemporary Detroit is largely narrated through a Black-white binary that "disappears" the presence and contributions of urban Indigenous people. In the twentieth and the early twenty-first century, if Indigenous people are mentioned at all in popular or academic discourse on the city, it is most often in historical accounts.

A CITY OF OUTSIDERS

Throughout the twentieth century, Detroit's economy and that of the United States as a whole have changed significantly, with serious consequences for both Black and Indigenous Detroiters. I argue that in many ways, these shifts represent a narrowing of the differences in the racialized positions of Indigenous and Black people that is most visible in their positions as workers, but can also be identified in struggles over housing, water, and incarceration. These shifts have created an economic context that reiterates a logic of elimination of Indigenous Detroiters through discursive disappearance and residential displacement. At the same time, Black Detroiters have been narrated in ways that increasingly resemble a logic of elimination as their place in the city's economy and discourse has shifted from low-wage worker to nonworker.

As Glen Coulthard has pointed out, settler colonialism takes a particular form of primitive accumulation that tends to dispossess Indigenous people of their land without proletarianizing them.²⁹ In other words, in stealing people's land without seeking to make use of their labor, settler colonialism tends to construct colonized Native people as nonworkers. This characterization then creates the narrative that Indigenous territories and occupied land are "unproductive," which justifies the settler takeover of that land.³⁰ This has been quite distinct from the ways in which Black people have historically been racialized as fungible, low-wage, exploitable workers.

For more than a century, Black people in Detroit and elsewhere have experienced levels of unemployment higher than that of whites. Urban Black workers were generally used by white settler capital to do the least desirable and most dangerous work, to depress wages, and to act as a buffer for employers in hard times—that is, if there was a need to lay off workers, Black workers were generally the first to experience those job losses. In general, however, Black people were still positioned as workers. In Detroit, for example, the Ford Motor Company specifically went to Black churches to recruit workers from the 1910s through the 1930s. Indeed, the company created an elaborate network of Black churches with pastors who would preach anti-union views from which to draw its Black labor.³¹

More generally, in the early twentieth century Black women, unlike white women, were assumed to be workers by the federal government and were therefore ineligible for what was then called the "mother's pension," which evolved into contemporary

welfare programs. The program's original rationale was that white women ought to be able to maintain their position as nonworkers in the face of divorce or death of a husband. Further, welfare rules did not require recipients to work until Black women were specifically included in the US welfare system in the 1960s.³²

Despite the racialization of Natives as "nonworkers," like Black Americans they were largely attracted to the city by jobs. This was due, at least in part, to extremely high unemployment on reservations. In Detroit, Indigenous workers were employed in a wide variety of occupations, including the industrial sectors that were at the heart of the city's economy. Like Black workers, Indigenous workers tended to work in the lower echelons of Detroit's industries. Urban Indigenous people had somewhat higher employment and income compared to those living on reservations, but compared to whites, employment and income were much lower.³³ Unlike Black workers, there is little evidence that certain sectors recruited Indigenous workers in particular. Their invisibility as a central population in the city played out in relative dispersion, both in terms of occupation as well as other factors like housing.

Much scholarship has examined the rise in Black unemployment in the latter half of the twentieth century, when factories in search of fewer labor and environmental regulations and cheaper, more compliant labor moved out of the city, the state, and the country. Throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and into the 1980s, Detroit experienced serious decline in the number of industrial jobs that had been at the heart of the city's rapid growth in the first half of the twentieth century. Due to increasing automation, those factories that remained employed fewer people, with Black workers experiencing disproportionate job loss.³⁴ By the 1970s a more or less permanent class of Black people had developed in Detroit and many other Northern cities, one that saw few employment prospects at all. Detroit activist James Boggs called these young Black people, who would never be fully incorporated into formal labor markets, a "generation of outsiders."³⁵ While scholarship and popular narratives of the city comment less frequently on Indigenous workers, they experienced a similar decline in employment. In 1978, survey data revealed that 55 percent of Native people ranging in age from twenty-one to thirty years in the city were actively looking for work but unemployed.³⁶

Not only has this pattern of deindustrialization and its racialized consequences been replicated in other cities throughout the rust belt, such as Gary, Indiana, and Flint, Michigan, but also in cities less known for abandonment. In Los Angeles for example, Ruth Wilson Gilmore points out that deindustrialization in South Los Angeles led to enormous unemployment in formerly working- and middle-class Black neighborhoods. The expansion of prisons in California's central valley imprisoning tens of thousands of Black residents of Los Angeles, she argues, is a spatial "fix" for their surplus labor and for the state's surplus administrative and financial capacity.³⁷

Indigenous scholars have similarly noted the disproportionate incarceration of both urban and rural Indigenous people in the United States, particularly visible in states with a significant Native population. For example, in North Dakota in 2010, Indigenous people constituted only 5 percent of the population, but 29 percent of incarcerated people. In Minnesota they were only 1 percent of the population, but 8 percent of the people incarcerated. Native Hawaiians were only 9 percent of Hawaii's

population, but constituted 40 percent of those incarcerated.³⁸ Salish and Kootenai sociologist Luana Ross notes that criminalizing Native people has been a crucial strategy to erode their sovereignty, observing that incarceration “was a strategy of settler colonialism.”³⁹ That is, it was its own kind of spatial fix, one that removed Native people from land.

While Black people in the United States had been racialized as exploitable workers through the first half of the twentieth century, by the latter half cheap Black labor has been widely replaced by even more exploitable groups. Manufacturing labor has been outsourced to the global South. Agriculture and domestic service in the United States, for example, once sectors in which many Black workers labored, currently rely primarily on vulnerable immigrants, whose labor is inexpensive due to precarious immigration status and English language barriers. Black bodies are becoming more and more surplus to a globalized capitalist system which continuously seeks cheaper, more exploitable labor. We can certainly see this surplus in cities like Detroit, where in 2010 an estimated 50 percent of Black working-age people did not have formal jobs.⁴⁰ While there have been no similar studies of Indigenous unemployment in the city, this is a statistic surpassed only by the unemployment levels on many US reservations.⁴¹ Arguably, Black people are increasingly racialized not as “unskilled” workers, but “nonworkers”: in their relationship to labor, in other words, Black people’s racialization is becoming more similar to the ways in which the settler state has long racialized Native people. Nationally, Native and Black unemployment rates are similar—respectively, 8.9 percent and 8.4 percent in 2016—higher than that of any other racial group. Unemployment for whites was 4.3 percent in that same year.⁴²

“RESETTLING” DETROIT

Redefining Black Americans as nonworkers has occurred simultaneously with a massive physical displacement of both Black and Indigenous Detroiters from their homes. In the 1960s and 1970s, white residents left the city for the suburbs, resulting in an increasingly poor Black city surrounded by largely white and more affluent suburbs. Black middle-class flight followed in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s as those Black families with the means and ability moved to suburbs like Oak Park and Taylor, often in search of better-funded schools.⁴³

Yet proportionately, the decade with the greatest loss in the city’s history—a full quarter of the population—occurred in the most recent census period, from 2000 to 2010, the time of a subprime mortgage banking collapse in the United States.⁴⁴ The mortgage crisis overlapped with the state of Michigan’s consent decree to reduce Detroit’s debt, which compelled a new city policy to aggressively pursue homeowners owing property taxes. Massive waves of tax foreclosures resulted in Detroit. From 2005 to 2014, more than one in three houses were foreclosed for nonpayment of mortgages or taxes, with another 31,108 tax foreclosures in 2015 and 2016.⁴⁵ Extremely high rates of eviction of renters in the city also occurred, with a *Detroit News* analysis of evictions estimating that one-fifth of city renters face eviction every year.⁴⁶ There

is much evidence that this housing crisis in the city massively impacted and displaced Black communities.⁴⁷

In addition, the city's extensive program of water shutoffs of residents behind in paying their water bills has compounded their displacement through eviction and foreclosure. Between 2014 and 2016 the city shut off water to 83,000 of the city's 175,000 residential accounts—about 47 percent.⁴⁸ The vast majority of those experiencing water shutoffs were Black. Even more disturbing, as I have written elsewhere,⁴⁹ much public discourse on the water shutoffs drew on anti-Black tropes such as the “welfare queen,” and some celebrated the shutoffs even as lack of access to water made life in the city unlivable for many Black residents.

This triple disaster of mortgage foreclosure, tax foreclosure, and water shutoffs, which has caused massive Black displacement, has taken place in the same period as Detroit's supposed “comeback” as white residents begin to return to the city. Not surprisingly, longtime Black residents widely perceive that, as Detroit rapper DMT has said, “They want to get us out of the city.”⁵⁰ Much less attention has been given to Indigenous Detroiters in this period of displacement, but it is likely that they were similarly impacted. A recent American Community Survey estimates that from 2010 to 2017, the Indigenous community in Detroit lost 22 percent of its population.⁵¹ It is probable that at least some of this population loss was due to the same factors that were impacting the Black community—mortgage foreclosure, tax foreclosure, eviction, and water shutoffs.

BLACK CITY, SETTLER NARRATIVES

A number of scholars, including urban geographer Neil Smith, have noted colonial undercurrents in processes and narratives of gentrification.⁵² For example, public discourse lauding Detroit's comeback have echoed narratives of westward expansion. One of the most obvious of these is the way in which a city of almost 700,000 people has been portrayed frequently in the last decade as being empty, being taken over by nature, and essentially evacuated of people. Sara Safransky has noted the ways in which these representations of emptiness in Detroit echo a settler logic. Through depictions of emptiness, they imply a directive—that is, that this land and this city need recuperation and salvation. Narratives of an empty and unpopulated Detroit “portray Detroit as a *terra nullius*—a ‘land belonging to no one’—for which there is a moral imperative to settle.”⁵³ Much recent public discourse about Detroit is preoccupied with its physical landscape of abandonment. However, this work focuses very little on the emotional, financial, and physical impact that the city's landscape has on the people who still live there. Rather, the lion's share of cultural production, particularly from those who do not live there, uses images of abandonment as either a form of beauty, or metaphors for societal degradation.

This is particularly graphic in what has been called “ruin porn”—photography and films marked by a lack of context behind the shocking images of abandoned buildings. Ruin porn fixates on grand structures like factories, theaters, and the Michigan Central Station that have been massively degraded, and often features an utter absence of the

people who still live in the city.⁵⁴ Nate Millington has noted ruin porn's tendency to effectively erase Black presence from the city. He observes, "Residents of the city are written out of the scene, replaced by a concern for decaying architecture rather than the lives of those who inhabit these buildings."⁵⁵ This concern for the ruins of the city, while rendering living residents invisible, certainly contains echoes of a settler fascination with Indigenous artifacts.

Works such as a photo essay by French photographers Yves Marchand and Romaine Meffre's "Ruins of Detroit," published in part by *Time* magazine, use the images of ruin in Detroit as a metaphor for the fall of empire. They explain their fixation on the city: "Detroit presents all archetypal buildings of an American city in a state of mummification. Its splendid decaying monuments are, no less than the Pyramids of Egypt, the Coliseum of Rome, or the Acropolis in Athens, remnants of the passing of a great Empire."⁵⁶ Similarly, New York-based photographer Camilo Vergara made the suggestion that Detroit's downtown be turned officially into a "skyscraper ruins park" shortly before he published his book of photographs of Detroit, called *American Ruins*.⁵⁷ Other scholars have noted a tendency to portray Detroit as being taken over by nature, with images of trees growing out of abandoned buildings and overgrown vines engulfing crumbling structures.⁵⁸ These portrayals convey a sense of contemporary Detroit as empty, open, wasted, and dead.

Detroit residents have noted this portrayal and worked to refute it. For instance, lifelong Detroiter Noah Stephens, started a website, "The People of Detroit," to profile residents in the city to create visibility of the vibrant life that exists in the city. The site's tagline is especially telling: "Because not everyone in Detroit is an abandoned building."⁵⁹ Nevertheless, boosterism of the city has reflected the idea that Detroit is abandoned—and thus new residents should move there. Entrepreneur Philip Kafka launched a campaign in New York's most gentrified areas to encourage New Yorkers to move to Detroit. The campaign included a billboard that said, "Detroit: be left alone," specifically drawing on portrayals of the city's emptiness.⁶⁰

Other efforts to promote moving to the city have specifically drawn on an old-West settler imaginary. A 2013 Craigslist posting from Portland, Oregon asked,

"Are you fascinated by Detroit? Are you, like me, a young person (or young person at heart) who does not want to get stuck with the same lame position working for table scraps for the rest of your life? Have you ever played the computer game Oregon Trail? . . . I'm in the process of rounding up a few good Michigan Trail-ers for the long trek to the promised land. Detroit. . . . This is your chance to be a part of something amazing, something great."

The post went on to describe a vague plan "to round up a good group (no number in mind yet), buy a property or two or three, fix em up, farm everything to Eden, and give back to the community (including ourselves)."⁶¹ The posting consciously reiterates the boosterism of US westward settlement, painting a vision of the "promised land" in which settlers will be part of both adventure and financial success. This plan to move to Detroit framed the venture as both personally beneficial and as a public good—that

it would “give back to the community,” and more importantly, that the community that would benefit included themselves.

This post also echoes another predominant media narrative about the city, which expresses a sense of Detroit as in need of salvation, financial and otherwise—a trope that certainly draws colonizing narratives. For instance, in 2009 *Time* magazine ran a story called “The Committee to Save Detroit” that featured a number of people, most of them white, whom the magazine positioned as possible “saviors of Detroit.”⁶² These include Dan Gilbert, CEO of Quicken Loans, one of the largest subprime mortgage companies in the United States, and L. Brooks Patterson, the county executive of neighboring Oakland County. In 2014, when asked by the *New Yorker* what should be done about Detroit’s financial problems, Patterson answered, “What we’re gonna do is turn Detroit into an Indian reservation, where we herd all the Indians into the city, build a fence around it, and then throw in the blankets and corn.”⁶³ Patterson makes astonishingly clear the link he saw between Black and Indigenous people in this statement, which both celebrates genocide against Indigenous people and advocates for Black people to be similarly treated. That Gilbert and Patterson were included in this list of Detroit’s “saviors”—particularly given Patterson’s history of explicitly racist comments about Detroit—certainly reflects a sense that *Time* magazine’s vision of Detroit’s “salvation” did not center the needs or desires of the city’s majority Black population. This narrative of salvation became so predominant that in 2016, a local activist group called ¡MIRA! held a street theater protest at an event at which Dan Gilbert was to speak. Posing as development evangelicals, they handed out satirical tracts declaring Dan Gilbert to be their “lord and white savior.”

Portrayals of Detroit as empty and in need of salvation are relatively new versions of a much more longstanding narrative of decline which developed and accelerated in the 1970s and 1980s and that explicitly drew on a sense of Black places as violent places. A vision of Detroit as a hyperviolent space in which it was unsafe to simply walk down the street has even been perpetuated by city and county officials, who appeared afraid to walk around the city that they administer. In 2013, for example, Detroit’s chief financial officer appointed by Emergency Financial Manager Kevyn Orr was forced to resign after he asked, “Can I shoot someone in a hoodie?” when he was told he needed to go on a tour in the city without a police escort, an apparent reference to the shooting of Trayvon Martin.⁶⁴ In 2012 the police union capitalized on Detroit’s reputation as hyperviolent to get increased funding and passed out a flyer to football fans after a Tigers game with the warning, “ENTER DETROIT AT YOUR OWN RISK.”⁶⁵

Such reluctance to enter Detroit without protection, particularly when expressed by public officials of the city, relied on and reinforced a widespread sense that Detroit’s neighborhoods—Black Detroit—were violent spaces of “absolute otherness.”⁶⁶ Importantly, these concerns about crime in Detroit orient toward concern for the non-Detroiter, who, in the racially binary narrative context of Detroit, tend to be coded as white. They exhibit little concern for Black Detroiters, who constitute the vast majority of crime victims in the city, or the nearly 170,000 children who live in the city, presumably without the benefit of a police escort.⁶⁷ These actions and statements

by public officials lend public legitimacy to the sense of Black Detroiters as essentially violent and simultaneously reiterate a clear message that white lives matter and Black lives do not.

This framing of Black space as violent space is reflected frequently in narratives of the city's "fall." Rebecca Kinney examines nostalgic narratives of Detroit's golden productive past, in which the city was populated by hardworking people framed as white. The increasing blackness of the city is then positioned as central to the city's "fall." Black spaces are naturalized as violent, uncared for, ruined spaces, and conversely, whiteness is positioned as the source of "nice" places, and "hard work,"⁶⁸ which then positions Black people themselves as the very source of that ruin—rather than the white flight and racist ghettoization of Black communities in US cities. This portrayal does double work: first, it naturalizes colonization and white occupation of the space of the city by positioning white people as "original" inhabitants of the city, and second, it positions the city as "ruined" by blackness. This account of Black space as non-productive is related to a wider, post-civil rights era narrative that Daniel Martinez HoSang and Joseph Lowndes have identified as central to a politics of the "New Right," which deeply influenced racial narratives writ large. HoSang and Lowndes describe a national, racialized ideology that frames communities as "producers" (white) or "parasites" (Black, brown, poor). These co-constitutive categories then serve as rationales for a wide variety of forms of dispossession.⁶⁹

Portrayals of Detroit as empty, violent, and "fallen" also lend themselves toward a sense that the city must be "saved": from its residents, who are portrayed as both violent and negligent (or not portrayed at all); from nature (in the form of "vacant" lots being taken back by nature); and, crucially, from unproductivity. The idea of salvation from unproductivity is especially salient in narratives of Detroit's "comeback," which tend to define comeback largely as Detroit becoming productive for capitalism, both in terms of a growth in business and in terms of a reincorporation of land into capitalist property markets. Certainly, this valorization of "productive" land as a justification of land takeover has been at the heart of settler logic, from John Locke's pity of "the Nations of America" who are "rich in land, but poor in the comforts of life" because they have not "improved" that land, to justifications of the Dawes Act arguing that Indians might be made more "productive" through individual land ownership.⁷⁰ For example, this conflation of comeback with capitalist productivity can be seen in the various lists of "who is saving Detroit." They emphasize either tech startups or "cultural creatives" coming to the city to "innovate" and the majority of persons on these lists are inevitably white and include Dan Gilbert and at least one other white entrepreneur.⁷¹ Indeed, it would be easy to read articles about Detroit "coming back" and assume Detroit to be a majority-white city.

The portrayal of emptiness in Detroit facilitates a positioning of the city as a kind of tabula rasa on which new residents—generally coded as young and white, may paint their dreams. And the simultaneous understanding of Detroit as mismanaged, violent, and dystopic, then makes their arrival and their dreams into an honorable mission. They are plucky young (white) people pulling themselves up by their bootstraps, building in a city that desperately needs them to build. Their ambitions, and indeed,

their very presence, are positioned as salvation. Much media about the city reinforces these settler ideologies by drawing on the language of westward expansion to describe Detroit. New residents are “urban pioneers,”⁷² and Detroit is an “urban frontier.”⁷³

These narratives echo in many ways settler logics that have been and continue to justify takeover or denial of Native land, while simultaneously employing longstanding tropes of anti-Black racism. At once, the city is portrayed as empty and mismanaged—that is, wasted, unproductive, in need of more “rational” management, echoing settler narratives.⁷⁴ And at the same time they draw on a sense that Black people don’t care for space, are not good stewards of land and property, and that Black communities are violent. Meanwhile, Indigenous residents are erased entirely from dominant narratives and portrayals of the city.

Ultimately, the litany of these narratives serves to deliver a sense that, as Rebecca Kinney has written, Black people are viewed in a mass public narrative as implicated—through their imagined violence, neglect, and incompetence—as the cause of Detroit’s “fall.”⁷⁵ In these narratives of salvation, one can see its opposite, what and whom Detroit is supposedly being saved from: white presence is positioned as development, in and of itself; Black presence—and through the reiteration of settler logics, Native presence—is positioned as underdevelopment, in and of itself. This echoes what Glen Coulthard calls “*urbs nullius*,” in which the logic of *terra nullius* is transposed onto urban spaces, and racialized and poor people’s places in cities are defined as “wasted.”⁷⁶

Accompanying this narrative is increasingly a widespread positioning of Black people as nonworkers—particularly through the racial coding of economic development as white. This shift, from Black people as exploitable workers to Black people as nonworkers, is perhaps one of the most important narrative and economic shifts that has accompanied the “comeback” of Detroit. As Coulthard has pointed out, settler colonialism has employed a narrative of Native people as nonworkers, which then justifies a takeover of their land in order to render it “productive.” The increasing positioning of Black Detroiters as nonworkers, both discursively and in their actual rates of unemployment, draws on this same logic. Black neighborhoods are demonized as ruined and thus unproductive, while new white residents’ “productivity” is celebrated.

If we understand the racialization of any group of people as being largely shaped by and adapting to the needs of a white settler power structure, then we can ask—how does shifting racialization reflect shifting white settler interests? Or more plainly, what now, if not labor, does a white settler society most want from Black people? There are likely a number of answers to that question, but certainly one of them is land; that is, the issue of land is not just an Indigenous issue. In places like Detroit, increasingly Black labor is less useful to the interests of white capital than the land that Black people occupy. This means that the position of Black people in the economy has more and more come to resemble in some respects (albeit certainly not all) the longstanding position of Native people in settler economies.

Development narratives in Detroit that celebrate the arrival of young white entrepreneurs to make Detroit productive again construct Black Detroiters as nonworkers and nonproductive, and therefore expendable. Indeed, because under modernity,

“productivity” in and of itself is a manifest good, it makes white occupation, which is framed as increasing productivity or “development,” into a *moral* good, a central ideology of settler colonialism.⁷⁷ Gentrification then can be celebrated as an act of *morality*—as salvation—the comeback that Detroit so desperately needed. This logic, drawn from much older but ongoing settler discourse, recasts as “sensible development” discourses in the city that manage to disappear the existence of Black residents, although they vastly outnumber white residents. This discursive erasure occurs simultaneously with physical displacement, as Black Detroiters are removed from the city en masse, through tax and mortgage foreclosure and water shutoffs. These narratives are made salient, familiar, and sensible in Detroit precisely because they draw heavily on an already established and constantly reiterated logic of elimination directed towards Native people. This new erasure of Black residents is superimposed on and reinforces already existing erasure of Indigenous communities in the city. And certainly, Native communities in Detroit have experienced much of the same displacement as Black communities in this same period of white “comeback.”

Jodi Byrd describes the ways in which “the United States has used executive, legislative, and juridical means to ‘make Indian’ those people and nations who stand in the way of U.S. military and economic desires.”⁷⁸ As with Byrd’s examples of the transposition of “Indianness” on foreign others to realize US imperial desires, narratives of comeback in Detroit are an internal iteration of Byrd’s conception of the Indian as a site of transit. This development narrative of Detroit’s rebirth through gentrification relies on both a long-standing white supremacist logic of Black fungibility, and the logic of elimination that develops out of the settler drive for land that is unoccupied by any inconvenient inhabitants who might lay a competing claim to it. This overlay of a logic of elimination on a Black city reiterates settler logic in general, further erasing the relationship to the space of the city by Native people—the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi tribes of Southeast Michigan—as well as the various other tribes that have come to live in the city.

Gentrification and Solidarity

As this resurgence and reframing of settler logics have emerged in the city, important ground-level interventions are making thoughtful connections between settler colonialism and anti-Black racism. The Native, Chicano, and Black hip-hop collective Raiz Up, for example, based in Southwest Detroit, has generated a number of important projects that center Detroit’s urban Native community, condemn a settler logic that undergirds all land grabs, and explicitly critique anti-Black racism.

The artists in Raiz Up contend with the complicated ways in which Black neighborhoods in Detroit are simultaneously both colonized Indigenous land and sites of Black containment, displacement, and resistance. As Anishinaabe artist Soufy raps in the track “Soul Alive,” when you are in Detroit, you are “walking on Indigenous land we call the ghetto.”⁷⁹ The video for Anishinaabe rapper Sacramento Knox’s track “Dirty Politix” begins with an image of Detroit captioned “Detroit: Stolen Anishinaabe Land.”⁸⁰ The video begins with a speech by Ojibwe activist Winona LaDuke overlaid

on images of young Black Detroiters as they rioted against police brutality in the 1967 Detroit Rebellion. Artists like Soufy and Sacramento Knox refuse disappearance and specifically call attention to the space of Detroit as Indigenous land while they also explicitly assert solidarity with Black struggle.

In addition, Raiz Up was instrumental in a local movement to remove a bust of Columbus from one of the city's busiest intersections. The bust had been a flashpoint for Indigenous communities in the city—in 2015 on Columbus Day it was found with a bloody hatchet lodged in its head—and it became a site of protest against white supremacy writ large and also a site where Detroit's Black community highlighted solidarity with Indigenous communities.⁸¹ In the days after 2017's racist Unite the Right Rally in Virginia, the organization Black Youth Project 100 (BYP100) organized a protest of white supremacy at the Columbus bust. Commenting to the *Detroit Free Press* that "these symbols of genocide and colonialism in America are no longer being tolerated," BYP100 member Adrian Polk described removing statues honoring colonialism and statues honoring the Confederacy as related movements.⁸²

Shortly after this protest, the petition Raiz Up created calling for the removal of the statue garnered more than 1,500 supporters. The petition called for the city to "reclaim the narratives of our forebears, by installing memorials of local heroes and icons who represent Indigenous or Black resistance, brilliance, and power" and suggested that these might include Tecumseh, Sojourner Truth, Charity Hicks, a Black Detroitier who fought for water rights for low-income residents, Chief Pontiac, Judge Damon Keith, a Michigan federal judge who championed civil rights, and Grace Lee Boggs, a Chinese-American Detroitier who was instrumental in local and national Black power movements.⁸³

It is both fraught and worrisome that some antigentrification activists use colonization as a straightforward metaphor for gentrification. However, if we try to deeply understand settler colonialism and anti-Black racism together—carefully teasing out the connections, exploring commonalities, and recognizing distinctions to try to deeply understand settler colonialism and anti-Black racism together—led, perhaps, by the analyses and coalitions between Indigenous and Black Detroit artists such as those in Raiz Up—such efforts can help us to get clearer understandings of the ways that racism continues to flex and adapt to white settler interests. It is my hope then that this understanding, in turn, can potentially open up spaces of greater understanding and more possibilities for informed, critical, and thoughtful forms of solidarity.

NOTES

1. Wakinyan Waanataŋ, "Gentrification is NOT the New Colonialism," *Last Real Indians*, July 29, 2017, <https://lastrealindians.com/news/2017/7/29/jul-29-2017-gentrification-is-not-the-new-colonialism?rq=gentrification%20is%20not%20the%20new%20colonialism>.
2. Joe Coscarelli, "Spike Lee's Amazing Rant against Gentrification: 'We Been Here!,'" *New York Magazine*, February 25, 2014, <http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2014/02/spike-lee-amazing-rant-against-gentrification.html>.
3. Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).
4. James Boggs, "The City Is the Black Man's Land," in *Pages from a Black Radical's Notebook: A James Boggs Reader*, ed. Stephen M. Ward (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011).
5. Monica Davey, "Detroit Was Crumbling. Here's How It's Reviving," *New York Times*, April 4, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/04/30/us/detroit-come-back-budget.html>; Aaron Millar, "Dazzled By Detroit: How Motown Got Its Groove Back," *The Guardian*, January 28, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2018/jan/28/detroit-michigan-motown-city-new-bars-live-music>.
6. Jessi Quizar, "The Detroit That Never Left: Black Grassroots Development," paper presented at Consciousness and Revolution conference, City University of New York, May 13, 2016.
7. J. P. Faber, *The New Pioneers: How Entrepreneurs Are Defying the System to Rebuild the Cities and Towns of America* (Dallas: Ben Bella Books, 2017); Jon Zemke, "Peck Produce Redefines Urban Pioneer with Boston-Edison Farm," *Model D*, April 9, 2013, <http://www.modeldmedia.com/startupnews/peckproducebostonedisondetroit040913.aspx>.
8. Bradley Blakeman, "We Can Homestead Detroit Back to Recovery," *The Hill*, November 18, 2016, <http://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/state-local-politics/306733-we-can-homestead-detroit-back-to-recovery>; John Sanphillippo, "Homesteading Detroit," *New Geography*, July 4, 2016, <http://www.newgeography.com/content/005301-homesteading-detroit>.
9. See, for instance, "The Committee to Save Detroit," *Time*, September 24, 2009, <http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/0,28757,1925913,00.html>; "10 People Helping Save Detroit" (photo exhibit), *Governing: The Future of States and Localities*, May 31, 2013, <http://www.governing.com/photos/people-helping-detroit.html>.
10. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* (New York: Routledge, 1994).
11. Winona Stevenson, "'Ethnic' Assimilates 'Indigenous': A Study in Intellectual Neocolonialism," *Wicazo Sa Review* 13, no. 1 (1998): 33–51, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1409028>.
12. Andrea Smith, "Indigeneity, Settler Colonialism, White Supremacy," in *Racial Formation in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Daniel Martinez Hosang, Oneka LaBennett, and Laura Pulido (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).
13. Addie Rolnick, "The Promise of Mancari: Indian Political Rights as Racial Remedy," *New York University Law Review* 86, no. 4 (2011): 958–1045.
14. Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 19.
15. Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387–409, 392, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520601056240>.
16. *Ibid.*; Smith, "Indigeneity, Settler Colonialism, White Supremacy"; Evelyn Nakano Glenn, "Settler Colonialism as Structure: A Framework for Comparative Studies of U.S. Race and Gender Formation," *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 1, no. 1 (2015): 52–72, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2332649214560440>.
17. Smith, "Indigeneity, Settler Colonialism, White Supremacy."

18. Indeed, to “pass” as white has frequently been framed as deception and trickery, even when the majority of one’s ancestors were white. See *Passing and the Fictions of Identity*, ed. Elaine Ginsberg (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996).
19. J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); Circe Sturm, *Becoming Indian: The Struggle Over Cherokee Identity in the Twenty-First Century* (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2011); Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race* (London: Verso, 2016).
20. Richard H. Pratt, “The Advantages of Mingling Indians With Whites,” in *Americanizing the American Indians: Writing by the “Friends of the Indian” 1880–1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 260–71.
21. Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” 388.
22. Mark Rifkin, “Introduction,” in *Settler Common Sense: Queerness and Everyday Colonialism in the American Renaissance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).
23. Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).
24. Smith, “Indigeneity, Settler Colonialism, White Supremacy.”
25. Tiffany King, “Labor’s Aphasia: Toward Anti-Blackness as Constitutive to Settler Colonialism,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, June 10, 2014, <https://decolonization.wordpress.com/2014/06/10/labors-aphasia-toward-antiblackness-as-constitutive-to-settler-colonialism/>.
26. Tiya Miles, *The Dawn of Detroit: A Chronicle of Slavery and Freedom in the City of the Straits* (New York: The New Press, 2017).
27. Kyle Mays, “Indigenous Detroit: Indigeneity, Modernity, and Gender Formation in a Modern American City, 1871–2000,” PhD diss., University of Illinois, 2015.
28. Ibid.
29. Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skins, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).
30. The settler framing of land as “productive” or “unproductive” underscores the profound differences between settler spatial imaginaries and Indigenous imaginaries, which emphasize relationships to land and non-human life. See, for instance, Nick Estes’s description of the ways in which the Apache thought of treaties as not only between human nations, but also between animal nations like the buffalo. Nick Estes, *Our History Is the Future* (London: Verso, 2019).
31. James A. Geschwender, *Class, Race, and Worker Insurgency: The League of Revolutionary Black Workers* (Cambridge University Press, 1977); Beth Tompkins Bates, *The Making of Black Detroit in the Age of Henry Ford* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).
32. Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty* (New York: Vintage, 1999).
33. Edmund Jefferson Danzinger, *Survival and Regeneration: Detroit’s American Indian Community* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991).
34. Heather Ann Thompson, *Whose Detroit? Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).
35. James Boggs, *The American Revolution: Pages from a Negro Worker’s Notebook* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1968).
36. Danzinger, *Survival and Regeneration*.
37. Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

38. Leah Sakala, "Breaking Down Mass Incarceration in the 2010 Census: State by State Incarceration Rates by Race/ Ethnicity" (Northampton, MA: Prison Policy Initiative, 2014), <http://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/rates.html>.
39. Luana Ross, *Inventing the Savage: The Social Construction of Native American Criminality* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998); Luana Ross, "Settler Colonialism and the Legislating of Criminality," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 40, no. 1 (2016): 1–16, 4, <https://doi.org/10.17953/aicrj.40.1.ross>.
40. "The State of the Child," Data Driven Detroit (2010), https://datadrivendetroit.org/files/SGN/D3_2012_SDCReport_Updated.pdf.
41. "Unemployment on Indian Reservation at 50 Percent: The Urgent Need to Create Jobs in Indian Country," Committee on Indian Affairs, § sec. Committee on Indian Affairs, United States Senate (2010), <https://www.indian.senate.gov/sites/default/files/upload/files/January2820102.pdf>.
42. "Labor Force Characteristics by Race and Ethnicity, 2017," US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, <https://www.bls.gov/opub/reports/race-and-ethnicity/2017/home.htm>.
43. Martin Katzman, "The Flight of Blacks from Central-City Public Schools," *Urban Education* 18, no. 3 (1983): 259–83, <https://doi.org/10.1177/004208598301800301>.
44. "2010 Census," United States Census Bureau (Washington, DC: 2010) <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/decade.html>.
45. 139,699 of 384,672 houses was reported. See John Kruth and Christine MacDonald, "Volume of Abandoned Homes 'Absolutely Terrifying,'" *The Detroit News*, June 24, 2015, <https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/special-reports/2015/05/14/detroit-abandoned-homes-volume-terrifying/27237787/>. For the 2015 and 2016 reports, Charles Ramirez and Christine MacDonald, "Detroit Tax Foreclosures Fall 88% since 2015," *The Detroit News*, September 19, 2017, <https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/detroit-city/2017/09/19/detroit-tax-foreclosures-down-duggan/680432001/>.
46. Christine MacDonald, "Persistent Evictions Threaten Detroit Neighborhoods," *The Detroit News*, October 5, 2017, <https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/special-reports/2017/10/05/detroit-evictions-threaten-neighborhoods-rentals/106315064/>.
47. Sandra Phillips, "The Subprime Crisis and African Americans," *The Review of Black Political Economy* 37, no. 3–4 (2010): 223–29, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12114-010-9078-7>.
48. Joel Kurth, "Detroit Cites Progress, But Water Shutoffs Actually Rose Last Year," *Detroit Journalism Cooperative*, May 2, 2017, <https://www.bridgemi.com/detroit-journalism-cooperative/detroit-cites-progress-water-shutoffs-actually-rose-last-year>.
49. Jessi Quizar, "A Bucket in the River: Race and Public Discourse on Water Shut-Offs in Detroit," Eastern Michigan University Department of Women's Studies Lecture Series, Ypsilanti, Michigan, 2015.
50. DMT the Rapper, "They Want to Get Us Out of the City," music video, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-aTvomHhW2k>.
51. 2010 US Census; American Community Survey, "ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates, Detroit, MI 2013–2017" (Washington, DC: US Census Bureau, 2018), <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>.
52. Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (New York: Routledge, 1996).
53. Sara Safransky, "Greening the Urban Frontier: Race, Property, and Resettlement in Detroit," *Geoforum* 56 (2014): 237–48, 241, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2014.06.003>.
54. Michael H. Miller, "Panic in Detroit Lures Shutterbugs, But How Much Ruin Porn Can We Take?," *Gallerist*, November 29, 2011, <http://galleristny.com/2011/11/panic-in-detroit-lures-shutterbugs-but-how-much-ruin-porn-can-we-take/>; Rebecca Kinney, "Longing for Detroit: The

Naturalization of Racism through Ruin Porn and Digital Memories," *Media Fields Journal*, no. 5 (2012), <http://mediafieldsjournal.squarespace.com/longing-for-detroit/>.

55. Nate Millington, "Post-Industrial Imaginaries: Nature, Representation and Ruin in Detroit, Michigan," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 37, no. 1 (2013): 279–96, 290, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2012.01206.x>.

56. Yves Marchand and Romaine Meffre, *The Ruins of Detroit* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2011).

57. Carlos Vergara, *American Ruins* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1999).

58. Millington, "Post-Industrial Imaginaries."

59. Noah Stephens, "The People of Detroit" exhibition, 2010, <https://www.thepeopleofdetroit.com/>.

60. Megan Willett, "New York Hipsters Are Being Encouraged to Move to New York," *Business Insider*, April 24, 2015, <https://www.businessinsider.com/move-to-detroit-campaign-in-new-york-2015-4>.

61. "Calling All Pioneers: The Michigan Trail (Detroit, MI)," Manu, *Craigslist Portland* creative gig advertisement, 2013, qtd. in Safransky, "Greening the Urban Frontier," 241–42.

62. "The Committee to Save Detroit," *Time*, September 24, 2009, <http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/0,28757,1925913,00.html>.

63. Paige Williams, "Drop Dead Detroit!" *The New Yorker*, January 24, 2014, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/01/27/drop-dead-detroit>.

64. Sarah Cwiek, "Detroit CFO Resigns over Controversial Comments," *Michigan Public Radio*, October 15, 2013, <http://www.michiganradio.org/post/detroit-cfo-resigns-over-controversial-comments>. This CFO was appointed by Emergency Financial Manager Kevyn Orr; Michigan Public Act 72 (1990) and Public Act 4 (2011) allows the state to place municipalities, counties, and school districts in a state of financial receivership if they are determined by the governor to be in a state of "financial emergency." This then suspends the decision-making power of local public officials and allows the governor to appoint an "emergency financial manager" (commonly called the EM). The EM then holds near total power to make policy decisions, with the highest priority being financial solvency. The eight cities that have undergone emergency management constitute 9.7% of the total population of the state, but 49.8% of the Black residents of Michigan. This means that nearly half of the Black people living in the state of Michigan have gone through a period—in some cases a number of years—essentially without any say in local representation or governance. See David Fasenfest and Theodore Pride, "Emergency Management in Michigan: Race, Class and the Limits of Liberal Democracy," *Critical Sociology* 42, no. 3 (2016): 331–34, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920516631916>.

65. CBS Detroit, "Enter at Your Own Risk: Police Union Says 'War-Like' Detroit Is Unsafe for Visitors," *Detroit CBS Local*, October 6, 2012, <http://detroit.cbslocal.com/2012/10/06/enter-at-your-own-risk-police-union-says-war-like-detroit-is-unsafe-for-visitors/>.

66. Katherine McKittrick, "On Plantations, Prisons, and a Black Sense of Place," *Social and Cultural Geography* 12, no. 8 (2011): 947–63, 954–55, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2011.624280>.

67. United States Census Bureau, "Detroit, MI State and County QuickFacts" (Washington, DC: US Department of Commerce, 2019), <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/detroitcitymichigan>.

68. Kinney, "Longing for Detroit," 6–8.

69. Daniel Martinez HoSang and Joseph Lowndes, *Producers, Parasites, and Patriots: The New Right-Wing Politics of Precarity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019).

70. John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1980 [1690]), <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/7370/7370-h/7370-h.htm>.

71. For example, see "The Committee to Save Detroit" and "10 People Helping Save Detroit."

72. For instance, the tagline of the Detroit Mercantile Company, located in the gentrifying Eastern Market district, is “provisions for the urban pioneer.” In 2018, Robert Stanzler, the boutique’s white owner, was arrested for spitting on a Black Detroiter because he was angry over people parking in his lot. While this was just one incident, it is perhaps telling: first, because this was an incident of fairly clear anti-Black racism that ultimately stemmed from a dispute over who had a right to occupy space in the city; and second, because of Stanzler’s identification as an “urban pioneer.” A video of the incident went viral as the incident became representative of anti-Black gentrification in the city. See Tom Perkins, “White Detroit Mercantile Owner under Fire for Spitting on Young Black Man over Parking Dispute,” *Detroit Metro Times*, July 18, 2018, <https://www.metrotimes.com/news-hits/archives/2018/07/18/white-detroit-mercantile-owner-under-fire-for-spitting-on-young-black-man-over-parking-dispute>.

73. See for instance, Aaron Renn, “Detroit: Urban Laboratory and the New American Frontier,” *New Geography*, November 4, 2009, <http://www.newgeography.com/content/001171-detroit-urban-laboratory-and-new-american-frontier>.

74. There is an interesting discussion of rationalizing management of indigenous people in Julie Tomiak, “Contesting the Settler City: Indigenous Self-Determination, New Urban Reserves, and the Neoliberalization of Colonialism,” *Antipode* 49, no. 4 (2017): 928–45, <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12308>.

75. Kinney, “Longing for Detroit.”

76. Coulthard, *Red Skins, White Masks*, 175.

77. Walter Hixson, *American Settler Colonialism: A History* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013).

78. Jodi Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011): xx.

79. Soufy, *Soul Alive* (Detroit, Michigan, 2017), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z818LxOsLuc>.

80. Sacramento Knox, *Dirty Politix*, music video (Detroit, 2015), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zr6szeepy1c>.

81. Lee DeVito, “Detroit’s Christopher Columbus Statue Vandalized,” *Detroit Metro Times*, October 12, 2015, <https://www.metrotimes.com/the-scene/archives/2015/10/12/detroits-christopher-columbus-statue-vandalized>.

82. J. C. Reindl, “Dozens Demonstrate in Detroit against White Supremacy, Christopher Columbus,” *Detroit Free Press*, August 19, 2017, <https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2017/08/19/demonstration-white-supremacy-christopher-columbus/583189001/>.

83. “Replace Chris Columbus Statue in Downtown Detroit with a Real Hero,” The Raiz Up Collective, Change.org, 2017, <https://www.change.org/p/detroit-city-council-replace-chris-columbus-statue-in-downtown-detroit-with-a-real-hero>.

